

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-06

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P 031500Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

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CTF 65

CTG 65.7

AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 9783

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS PFOR EG

SUBJECT: DEACTIVATION/REPAIR OF TWO USN HEAVY LIFT

CRAFT (YHLC) AT ALEXANDRIA SHIPYARD

REF CTG SIX FIVE PT SEVEN P021633Z NOV 74 (NOTAL)

1. EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED REQUEST FROM CAPTAIN J. H. BOYD JR. (CTG 65.7), NAVAL SEA SYSTEMS COMMAND, FOR GUIDANCE RE POSSIBILITY OF HAVING PRE-INACTIVATION REPAIRS TO TWO US NAVY YHLC, CURRENTLY COMPLETING SUEZ CANAL CLEARANCE OPERATIONS, PERSONNEL AT COMMERCIAL SHIPYARD IN ALEXANDRIA, EGYPT. REQUEST HAS SUPPORT OF RADM CARROLL, CTF 65.

2. CAPTAIN BOYD INFORMED EMBASSY THAT, IN EFFORT TO CONSERVE US FUNDS, HE EXPLORED POSSIBILITY OF HAVING THESE NAVY-OWNED CRAFT REPAIRED IN EGYPT PRIOR TO RETURN TO US FOR INACTIVATION. HE DETERMINED THAT ALEXANDRIA SHIPYARDS AT ALEXANDRIA HAVE CAPACITY TO HANDLE THIS WORK AND COULD PERFORM IT QUICKLY AND CHEAPLY. HIS ESTIMATE FOR SIMILAR WORK TO BE
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DONE IN THE US WOULD BE APPROXIMATELY \$500,000, WHEREAS

COST FOR REPAIRS MADE IN ALEXANDRIA WOULD PROBABLY RUN LESS THAN 100,000 EGYPTIAN POUNDS.

3. BOYD NOTES YHLCS ARE NOT COMMISSIONED SHIPS AND OUTWARDLY APPEAR TO BE COMMERCIAL CRAFT RATHER THAN US NAVY UNITS. MOREOVER, THEY WOULD BE MANNED BY CIVILIAN CREWS (MURPHY PACIFIC) OF TEN MEN OR LESS EACH WHICH WOULD ALSO INCLUDE ONE DOD CIVILIAN EMPLOYEE.

4. BOYD RECOGNIZES REQUEST, IF FORMALLY SUBMITTED TO GOE, COULD POST SOME POLITICAL AS WELL AS FINANCIAL PROBLEMS. THUS, SHIPYARD WHERE REPAIRS WOULD BE ACCOMPLISHED IS LOCATED IN ALEXANDRIA RESTRICTED PORT AREA WHERE SOVIET NAVAL VESSELS HAVE "FACILITIES" AND WHERE EGYPTIANS HAVE HERETOFORE NOT GIVEN US FREE ACCESS. APART FROM PROPRIETY OR DESIRABILITY OF HAVING THIS WORK PERFORMED IN EGYPT UNDER PRESENT POLITICAL CIRCUMSTANCES, WE WOULD HAVE TO EXPLORE WHETHER IT WOULD BE AGREEABLE TO HAVE THIS WORK DONE AT PRESENT TIME AND IN THAT PARTICULAR PORT AREA. GOE WOULD ALSO HAVE TO APPROVE ANY SURPLUS EGYPTIAN CURRENCY ALLOCATION FOR THIS PURPOSE AND MIGHT INSIST ON HARD CURRENCY PAYMENT FOR SUCH SERVICES.

5. BOYD BELIEVES THAT DRYDOCKING AND SUEZ-RESPONSIBLE REPAIRS SHOULD, IF AT ALL POSSIBLE, BE PAID FOR IN EGYPTIAN POUNDS AND CHARGED TO COSTS OF CLEARANCE OPERATION. ANY ADDITIONAL WORK PERFORMED INCIDENT TO CRAFT INACTIVATION WOULD PRESUMABLY BE CHARGEABLE TO US NAVY.

6. EMBASSY IN PRINCIPLE HAS NO OBJECTION TO THIS PROPOSAL INASMUCH AS THESE YHLCS ARE NOT COMBAT VESSELS NOR HAVE NAVAL PERSONNEL ABOARD. SINCE THEY HAVE BEEN WORKING ON SUEZ CANAL CLEARANCE, IT WOULD SEEM APPROPRIATE FOR ANY REPAIRS WHICH ARE NECESSARY BEFORE THEY RETURN TO THE US TO BE PERFORMED IN NEAREST COMPETENT SHIPYARD, WHICH HAPPENS TO BE IN ALEXANDRIA. ON OUR PART, WE SEE NO OBJECTION TO THESE CRAFT BEING DRYDOCKED IN RESTRICTED AREA USED BY SOVIET NAVAL VESSELS, BUT GOE WILL HAVE TO DECIDE WHETHER IT IS PREPARED TO PERMIT THIS AND MAY, ESPECIALLY AT THIS PARTICULAR TIME, BE SENSITIVE TO POSSIBLE SOVIET REACTIONS.

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7. GIVEN SUBSTANTIAL SAVING THAT WOULD REBOUND TO BENEFIT OF USG, EMBASSY RECOMMENDS APPROVAL OF AN APPROACH TO GOE FOR PERMISSION TO HAVE REPAIR WORK PERFORMED AT ALEXANDRIA, INCLUDING REQUEST THAT GOE ACCEPT PAYMENT IN US-OWNED EGYPTIAN POUNDS IN VIEW OF FACT THAT THESE CRAFT HAVE BEEN ENGAGED IN SUEZ CANAL CLEARANCE PROJECT.

8. BOYD INDICATES WORK SHOULD BE COMMENCED ABOUT
DECEMBER 15 AND WOULD LAST FOR APPROXIMATELY ONE MONTH.
PROMPT DECISION IS NECESSARY IF WORK IS TO BE PERFORMED
IN ALEXANDRIA; OTHERWISE ALTERNATE ARRANGEMENTS WILL HAVE
TO BE MADE QUICKLY.
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